

It's too Easy!

By Carol Gannaway

One of our expectations of dogs is to not jump on us and another is to walk on the leash with out pulling. Both of these behaviors can be taught to your dog using positive methods. Let's start with teaching the dog to keep all four feet on the ground as a greeting behavior using positive methods. No pinching, kneeling, pushing or shouting allowed. Your goal is to make keeping all four feet on the ground more rewarding than jumping. The easiest way to do that is to have high value rewards available during the training process. High value rewards go beyond dry biscuits; try cheese, hot dogs, homemade treats, you get the idea. In the beginning phase of training it might make is easier for your dog to be successful if your dog is attached to his leash. Now you are ready to train.

Whenever your dog jumps on you, turn away and ignore him. Never acknowledge jumping. Any reaction from you is reinforcing your dog in some way or he wouldn't be jumping. Remember dogs repeat behaviors that are rewarded. Now you must acknowledge and reward your dog anytime he walks past you and all four feet are on the ground. I bet this happens hundreds of times each day around your house and your dog is getting no recognition for that behavior. You can see where the mistake is being made. The dog is getting all of your attention when he is jumping and none of your attention when all four feet on the ground. You can easily change that, can't you?



After a few weeks of changing your focus you will hardly remember the time your dog was jumping all over you, but what about your friends. Does your dog still jump on them? Ask a few friends to come over and explain to them what to do....ignore the dog when he is jumping and praise and reward when all four feet are on the ground. This is dog training and as you know dog training takes time. Your dog won't quit jumping on you in a day or two but with consistent reinforcement for the correct behavior over a period of a few weeks or months you will notice your dog is not interested in jumping, why should he be?

Next let's address walking on leash without pulling. This is another example of looking at what is rewarding for your dog. Well I can tell you for a fact that the environment is very rewarding to a dog; bunnies, bunny poop, birds, other dogs, blowing leaves, the list is endless. Your task is to be more rewarding to your dog than all of that. I suggest again yummy rewards...something better than bunny poop...and a lot of enthusiasm. Appreciate the hard work your dog is performing. Start your training on your driveway and reward your dog anytime he looks at you. Once your dog is very attentive while you are on the driveway you are ready to try walking your dog on leash on the grass. Each time you work with your dog, you will notice he is more attentive to you.

Keep in mind that it doesn't matter what you think should be rewarding for your dog, it is the dog that determines that. If during your training your dog does not look at you and only strains to sniff the ground you need better rewards. Here are some tips. If the leash is tight do not take another step forward. You might try turning and going the other way, then as your dog reaches your side and the leash is hanging in a "J" under your dog's neck, reward. As your dog is pulling forward you should take steps backwards, no forward motion while the leash is tight. Your dog will soon understand that pulling is not as rewarding as paying attention to you and walking with the leash loose.

I bet if you have been to one of my classes you have heard me address these two topics. If your dog is still jumping on you or your friends, or walking him on leash is a challenge ask yourself, "Did I stop training short of success? Did I quit using rewards? Did I acknowledge my dog's successes?" Change your focus and ignore what your dog is doing incorrectly and acknowledge and reward proper behavior. It sounds too easy doesn't it? The best part is, it works!